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FEW
REMARKS
ON THE
NATURE & CURE
OF
COLD S.

By T. M. KELSON. *K*

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REMARKS &c.

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of my disquisitions, I have often found

THERE is nothing which requires greater nicety in our inquiries respecting diseases, than correctly to

distinguish what are immediate and absolute causes; from those which are only collateral.

Nor is there any disposition, in which we are more likely to be misled in those points, by superficial appearances and vulgar prejudice,

than in this I am treating of.

To admit that a disease must derive its origin from certain causes, because

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those causes have long been indisputably admitted to be the true ones, is a doctrine I cannot indiscriminately subscribe to. That would be cutting short all further enquiry and Improvement. In the way of my profession, I very seldom determine upon either effects or causes, until I have clearly brought them within the limits of my own narrow conceptions: and in the course of my scepticism, I have often found it necessary to assign some very different, to those usually allowed of. But in no instance have I discovered the generally received theory, to palpably erroneous, as in that relating to colds. To point out a truth of such importance, and to illustrate it by a variety of arguments, is the object of the following pages.

To admit that a disease must derive its origin from certain causes, because those

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nerally affected by them, through cold,
have been inadequately, prompted and
determined to be the sole and immediate
cause of the morbid complaint.

IN tracing the powers of
the human frame, experience shews, that
habit has no small concern, in their
due regulation. And that it is by
a change of circumstances, our con-
stitutions are more immediately subject-
ed to the invasion of most distempers.
Nature, in adapting herself to a new
situation, is seemingly thrown off her
guard, becomes more vulnerable, and
more liable to suffer by an enemy,
whose attacks she might otherwise have
sustained without inconvenience. And
the climate of this country being of a
very variable nature, exhibiting sudden

and violent changes ; those, either from the supposed ill-effects of dampness, or from perspiration being partially or generally affected by them, through cold, have been inconsiderately premised and determined, to be the sole and immediate origin of this troublesome complaint ; when at most they should be considered, as only exciting or aggravating causes, by concurring with the operation of a specific and contagious matter.

It is also evident from daily observation, that those vicissitudes of weather become much less, even exciting causes of the disorder, to those people who on all occasions, are in the habit of contending with them ; upon the principle, that nature is not so susceptible of the change, by the frequency of its recurring.

FROM this mode of reasoning, I trust it will appear, that those persons who
are

are accustomed to live in great warmth, are not less exposed to colds, than those who are confined to the opposite temperature. And that if they happen to change their condition, the one party will have little or no better chance of avoiding the disease, than the other; unless, through any intervening circumstances, this specific contagion should be unequally applied to them. In short, that neither cold or heat, when unconnected and detached from all catarrhus effluvia, is to be esteemed, even a most distant cause, of this common disorder. Though sometimes, by the mutability of either, more particularly by the transition from heat to cold, the natural functions may be interrupted; and thus by weakening the means of resistance, provided against any such casual mischief, it becomes an exciting cause of it. But in these assertions, I shall be very liable to receive a contradiction from those, who

who have not given that close attention to the origin and progress of colds, which I have been long in the habit of doing.

I have no notion, altho it be a very fashionable one, of *morbus sine materia*. And I am also thoroughly convinced, no specific disease arises from matter, generated in a sound and perfect habit. The stimulus of all such infirmities, must be introduced there by some inlet or other. The restraining of any particular secretion, or the repelling of any excretions, are circumstances of little consequence, unless continued for a length of time. In that case, it will cause a local and temporary disturbance, but not an absolute disease.

NATURE, almost under all circumstances, has two strings to her bow. If one organ, or function, be interrupted,

ed, some other is ready to undertake a double task. And, fortunately for my doctrine, she has in no instance observed that policy stronger, than in the one that relates to perspiration; which every person of the least observation, must have often ascertained. In the heat of summer, perspiration goes on freely, and but little urine is voided; in the cold of winter the very reverse is the fact—perspiration is trifling, but then the kidneys do double duty: and whether that fluid be discharged by the one means or the other, no material effect is produced in the general system. How absurd it seems then, to attribute colds to the checking of this excretion, taking it in toto! and still more so, if it be only partial, perhaps in so small a part of the habit, as the side of the neck.

BUT if, for the sake of argument, we allow checked perspiration to be the cause

cause of colds; and that being stopped or driven back into the circulation, it is incumbent on nature to find out some other channel for it to make its exit; for though the usual sluices are again almost immediately opened, this fluid obstinately resists returning to its wonted course; still it appears very remarkable, that nature, who is usually a very good contriver, should manage so badly, as to oblige the glands of the throat and lungs, to undertake this secretion; which are only calculated to separate an insipid fluid, merely for the sake of lubricating the surface of those parts.

In the animal oeconomy, it is well understood, that the secretory powers are of two descriptions: the one sort is adapted to the purpose of throwing off redundant, useless, or obnoxious matter; the other is calculated to secrete particular fluids, for the defence and service of

of certain organs. The kidneys, liver, glands of the skin, &c. are of the former class; those of the nose, ears, eyes, throat, &c. are of the latter: which in a sound state, certainly have not the power of secreting any other fluids, than those calculated for the above mentioned purposes. These glands, from any adventitious circumstances, may be interrupted in their office, and do their duty badly; a thinner matter may be secreted, from the vessels of the glands being lessened or contracted by inflammation and other causes. Of course, not affording that good defence to the membranes which was intended, and by that means, superficial inflammation will be much encouraged, as will be hereafter noticed. And can it be supposed, that nature should expect these, when diseased, to undertake the burthen of relieving the constitution from a noxious matter, which in a sound state, are confined

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fined to the separating an innocent fluid, for a particular purpose? But even admitting that to be the case, and to follow the same line of argument, it must be further observed, that this interruption of perspiration having taken place, the constitution at first does not seem in the least sensible of it, but remains quiet under the burthen, not making any attempts to exonerate itself. Indeed, it is first felt as an inconvenience, when partly expelled, or at least, during the exertion made for that purpose; or rather it is the exertion itself which provokes the mischief. A day or two elapses before this supposed effort is made, and that, for some time is scarcely perceptible, being confined to a very minute part of the throat or lungs. By degrees, nature gets more active, a larger portion, perhaps the whole surface of both, is employed in its expulsion.

Now

Now in reflecting upon the above recital, in the first place, can it be conceived, that the system should endeavour to get rid of what does not in the least incommode it? Or can it be allowed, that this matter which appears so capable of stimulating the more hardened membranes of the throat, has been floating through the heart, brain, &c. in its way thither for some time, without causing the least disturbance? Or, that nature should call upon the mucous glands of the throat &c. to relieve her of a burthenfome fluid, which duty they are so far from being adapted to perform, that by doing it, they not only suffer an intire perversion of their natural functions, but are greatly irritated and disordered by it: and that she should do this, in preference of applying to the kidneys for that purpose, which are always ready to undertake the task, and are never inconveni-

enced in performing it? Or can it be imagined, that this harmless secretion, merely by being translated from the pores of the skin, to the glands of the chest, should suffer such a complete alteration in its nature and properties, as to render it, not only offensive and injurious to the habit immediately concerned, but also to any other that may come within the influence of its contagious exhalations?

I MUST reject such suppositions.—There certainly is no particular determination of the perspirable matter, to the glands of the lungs and parts adjacent. They are not acting in this disease, as a relief to the habit. Their affection is purely accidental, and not official.—To be more explicit—they are only stimulated by a virus, externally and superficially applied to them; and are not ejecting any offending matter

ter from within. This assertion is daily and hourly confirmed by colds, even violent ones, shewing themselves as mere local complaints, interrupting no one function in the habit, beside that of the mucous glands, where this specific matter is immediately deposited; producing no thirst, loss of appetite, depression of strength, or any other symptom, indicating a general affection.

It cannot be understood, that the momentary and partially checking of perspiration, should by somewhat increasing the afflux of fluids to the lungs produce this disease; when it is well known, that perspiration may be stopped altogether by intense frost, cold bathing &c. for a length of time without any inconvenience, but frequently with great benefit. And the complaint shewing itself much more frequently in the throat than in the lungs; to which

which spot, there can be no good reason given for supposing any particular determination of the fluids, in case they are repelled from the surface of the body in preference to any other internal part, is a circumstance which tends strongly to remove such an idea.

I do not deny, but that a stream or current of cold air will frequently, when applied to any particular part of a delicate habit, cause stiffness, pain, and even inflammation in that part; which is not the effect of checked perspiration, but merely that of the astringency of the cold. When the action of the heart is strong, and the body in general of a warm temperature, of course, the smaller vessels expanded, and circulation going on freely, if these in any one part, should be suddenly contracted by cold, what would be the natural consequence? Those small vessels

so contracted, by resisting the force of the larger ones, are liable to be greatly irritated, and forcibly distended. Pain and inflammation follow, as it would if the part were injured from external violence.

THE same inconvenience arises, if great exercise be used, particularly in a cold atmosphere, when the external vessels do not readily dilate to the increased impulse of the arteries. And no doubt but the glands of the throat and lungs, are liable to be much interrupted in their functions, by the direct application of intense cold to those parts, which by acting as a severe astringent, produces the ill effect of inducing a much thinner secretion; and that if long continued, may terminate in superficial inflammation, from the defluxion not affording the defence necessary, to guard those parts against the

the constant action of the air, and the stimulating particles almost invariably mixed with it. And it can be readily conceived, if any contagious matter happen to be floating at this particular period, it may more easily be deposited on the immediate surface of the throat &c. than when defended by the natural mucous. Of course, under that particular occurrence, cold may be said to lead more readily to the disease than heat.

Cold also as a grand promoter of absorption, may contribute much to its being admitted into the habit, after it has been received upon any particular surface; which in some measure accounts for the disorder being more obstinate, and seldomer a complaint merely local, in the winter than in the summer season.

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As this malady cannot in all cases, by the usual intricate mode of reasoning, be imputed to the ill effects of an interrupted perspiration through cold, it has been customary to affix ideas equally unfavourable to the exposure to dampness. But what similitude there is betwixt the vapour of stagnated moisture, and that of the skin, I never could discover. But even allowing this to be another immediate cause of colds, how can the habit be affected by it? Only by some of this noxious effluvia, being deposited on a part susceptible of its stimulus, producing a local and superficial complaint; which afterwards, if admitted into the habit, may become the cause of a general affection. But clearly, that spot where the deposit is first made, must be looked upon as the seat and source of the disorder, and not to be the part which nature fixes upon to vent it from.

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If damp were productive of the complaint, it would still be a more common one than it is. Very few people who lead an active life, can pass a single day, without being in some degree exposed to mischief of that nature. And contrary to the generally received opinion, the danger of getting it must be much greater in that variation, when cold suddenly terminates in heat, than in the opposite transition; As evaporations are usually regulated by the increase or decrease of heat, All moisture is condensed by cold, of course rendered less active, and heat, by making it more volatile, produces the opposite effect.

I HAVE heard it asserted by many, that they, when sitting in a damp room, have been instantaneously affected with a severe and general cold. That they have, at such a time and place,

place, felt the first symptoms of the disorder, previously caught, may possibly be the case. But how little must those people be acquainted with the animal system, and the nature of absorption, to suppose their illness to arise from the immediate impression of this pernicious vapour. They cannot know, that there is no admission, even of the most subtle exhalations, into the habit, but by the means of the absorbents; and also, that inflammation must in some degree precede absorption, therefore that a considerable time will be necessary for completing the business.

I KNOW of no virus being quicker admitted, than that producing scarlet fever; which, I believe, at the soonest is the second day after it is deposited on the surface of the throat. And the matter which excites cold, I am inclin-

ed to think, is commonly a day longer in gaining admittance into the system.

THAT a cold is a disease sui generis, depending upon the application of a specific matter, is also plainly indicated by the symptoms being always similar: at least, only varying, as all other contagious distempers do, according to the particular disposition of the habit that is attacked, the season of the year, climate, &c. And as the idea of breeding disorders has long been exploded, it will be unnecessary for me to observe, if this complaint be allowed to be of a class peculiar to itself, it can only be expounded upon the principle, I am now endeavouring to establish.

THIS matter I believe to be permanently existing, as much as that producing small pox, or any other of a
 conta-

contagious nature. And when applied to those parts of the human body, liable to be affected by it, will become the cause of a distemper, infectious, in proportion to its virulence: which usually is so far regulated by the circumstances of season, constitution &c. as either to appear in the trifling form of a sniveling cold, or even to induce it to take the formidable shape of influenza, as hath lately been amply verified, both in the metropolis and country.

IT is active only when near the source from whence it arises, that is, when received almost immediately from an infected person.

THE parts liable to to be affected by it, are, the lungs, throat, nose, eyes, and lips. I have frequently traced it to each of those parts, all of which, from the fineness of their membranous
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covering, readily admit of irritation. But, of the parts here enumerated, the throat is certainly more commonly attacked than any other. In that case, the inconvenience which first ensues, will be purely local; producing a sense of dryness, and soreness, near the interior opening of the nose. But the affection is of that trifling nature, and the part affected is usually so small and restricted, that it seldom is sufficient to arrest the attention, until it has existed a whole day or more; when it gradually extends to the nose, giving a sensation of fulness in that part, soon amounting to a degree of irritation, consequently sneezing, and defluxion: the eyes, through the means of the ducts which convey the tears, soon participate in the mischief; at the same time, the baneful influence is communicated to the trachea and lungs, producing much greater soreness, perhaps

haps hoarseness and oppression of breathing, often attended with a dry and painful cough. In saying thus much, I shall most commonly have enumerated the symptoms, which mark the height of the distemper, but occasionally the case will be more aggravated. The glands of the throat will be enlarged, the lungs more inflamed, a pleury will supervene &c. &c. Or many other symptoms may arise, very different from those already noticed (which are all the consequence of local and superficial inflammation) from the mischief being admitted by the absorbents into the general habit, causing shiverings, pains in the back and limbs, thirst, and other marks of fever. But, as I before observed, these last appearances are not necessary to constitute a cold. I have more frequently seen, and had, the disease altogether superficial and local, unattended with fever or general affection.

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It appears, this matter has not like many others, the power of assimilating the fluids of the internal habit, if it be there admitted. It disorders merely by irritating the vessels it passes through, and is not, of course, to be looked upon as dangerous, or obstinate of cure.

A COMPLAINT may most commonly be termed serious, or otherwise, according to the greater or lesser power the matter causing it, has of internal assimilation. Sometimes, during a cold, there will be a few pimples about the mouth, which we may suspect to be the effect of such a power; but that appearance is fallacious, and can be only the spot, where the infection was first received; or the consequence of morbid effluvia, or defluxion from the mouth or nose, affecting it as a neighbouring part. That it has this power, when acting upon a part external-
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ly, is evident from the exhalations arising from the throat, lungs, &c. being infectious, and inducing a similar disease, in any other habit exposed to it. If such infection could be always avoided, the disease might be ever escaped; but as that can be only done, at the heavy expence of shunning all society, it will most probably continue more common than any other complaint.

I MAY here also observe, if colds were only the natural and spontaneous effect, of the translocation of that fluid, usually discharged by the pores of the skin, to the glands of the lungs, that we might just as reasonably expect to get the disease, by being exposed to its effluvia, when proceeding from the one part as the other. And that colds are to be communicated, is too evident a fact to admit of a dispute.

To remove, or palliate it, when first received, we should take the same means as are used in all other superficial inflammations. Nothing is more effectual, than the early and frequent application of demulcents, mucilages, &c. provided the part first affected will admit of such applications. And these mucilaginous, oily, or sweet remedies, produce their good effects, merely by besmearing and lubricating the fauces, &c. thereby stopping, or retarding the progress of superficial inflammation; which the vitiated discharge at this time, from the neighbouring inflamed glands, is rather calculated to encourage, than to prevent. But any of those medicines, taken into the stomach, can be thought of no avail, by those who are at all acquainted with the nature of digestion, and the little chance there must be in the labyrinth of circulation, for any particle of it ever to arrive
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at the spot affected.

SOMETIMES, unfortunately the virus in the first instance, is deposited upon the lungs, or in the trachea, so as not to be within the benefit of those useful, and easy applications. In such cases, recourse should be had to inhaling warm steam, arising from bran and water; or any other vapour, that may be thought of an emollient or relaxing nature; with the view of causing a more copious and healthy expectoration.

I HAVE often thought, exhalations from acetous and other acids properly diluted, have had a good effect. I conceive they act, not only by increasing, from their stimulus, the discharge of the mucous glands, and thus in some measure washing off the infection, but by combining with, and destroying the

virus, which I suppose to be, as most other animal poisons are, of an alkaline nature.*

THE extension of the mischief may also be very much restrained, by constantly covering the chest, and a large portion of the body with flannel; which acts, not as a preventive; but by keeping upon the surface of the body, a much larger proportion of blood, it of course, eases the internal vessels, more particularly those of the lungs, which in all cases of pneumonic inflammation, is ever of most essential

* What is here meant by Animal poisons, does not only relate to that of venemous creatures, but to all morbid matter, generated by disease, and expelled from living animals. The vapour of acids, fumes of gunpowder, &c. &c. always found so beneficial in purifying infected rooms, and stopping the progress of contagious disorders, act upon this principle of neutralization; and should be used more frequently, and more liberally than they commonly are.

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benefit. By this means, the circulation is likewise rendered more steady, and less liable to interruption; without which security, the natural functions, particularly those of the glands, must be subject to great irregularity; and that, as I have before observed, becomes an exciting cause of the distemper.

If the virus be admitted into the habit, or its ill effects be extended over so considerable a surface of the lungs, as to cause much general irritation, such topical applications only, will not be sufficient. Bleeding, blistering, sudorifics, and purgatives, must be had recourse to. A repetition of bleeding will generally be very useful, provided the blood have an inflammatory appearance; which is known by the red globules falling suddenly through the fizy part, leaving it when cold coagulated on the top. This cir-
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cumstance, in all cases of inflammation, takes place in some degree. And, I believe, from some experiments I have made with the thermometer, it depends upon the coagulable lymph becoming thinner, from being heated by a quickened circulation, usually the consequence of some stimulus applied to the heart and arteries; which irritation is often much mitigated by emptying the vessels.

In other diseases less common, the coagulable lymph, from some causes not so easily ascertained, and in this confined treatise not to be entered upon, will be rendered thinner, and incapable of suspending the red globules, though of its usual temperature in regard to heat, as in some kinds of peripneumony; in these latter cases, bleeding is as hurtful, as it is serviceable in the former.

FOOD

Food of the farinaceous and vegetable kind only, ought to be allowed. Milk, so much approved of by most practitioners in complaints of the lungs, should not be admitted of in high inflammatory cases; as it, in a great measure, produces the same ill effects as all other animal food, of which kind it certainly must be reckoned. I have ascertained that fact in numerous instances, with patients under inoculation for the small pox; the success of which, depends altogether upon preventing inflammation as much as possible, and introducing an ascescent disposition into the fluids. And, I believe, what renders children at the breast liable to a larger eruption, is, that their nutriment is principally of the animal kind. I have made many fair experiments to this purpose, with large families, at the same season of the year, under similar ages and circumstances in all respects,

species, by permitting the use of milk to some, and not to the others. And in every instance, the result has been favourable to my opinion.

In returning to the original subject, it being rather my wish to introduce a different theory, than to materially alter the practice in the disorder, I trust it will appear, that I have advanced sufficient argument, not only to secure myself from the ridicule of my brethren in the profession, but also to somewhat remove the prejudices of the public in general, in regard to the mischief, supposed to ensue from the exposure to cold and dampness. And I do not despair of shortly finding, that those, who are in the habit of observing and reasoning upon the subject, will be as well satisfied as I am of the innocency of both, as far as relates to the causing of this particular distemper.

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It must also be noticed, that in this short treatise I wish to comprehend no other complaint, than that usually understood by the term, Catarrh. Were I to enlarge upon all the disorders, which are occasionally called colds, I must mention almost every one that the human body is subject to. And I will venture to say, one and all of them, have their origin no more from an intemperate atmosphere, than the one under consideration; speaking of them as diseases, and not interruptions of the animal system. Indeed, I will not allow dampness, detached from cold, to have even the power of interfering with the animal functions, which are going on with tolerable vigour. It must be the weakest habits only, that can be affected by it. When I speak of dampness, I mean, pure condensed watery particles, unconnected with putrid, or any other effluvia, often met

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with under that form, in places long deprived of a free circulation of air &c. Such, beyond a doubt, are capable of producing much mischief, both local and general, in a habit exposed to them. But there can be no reason for supposing it to constitute a complaint, similar to the one I have been treating of; unless that of its being generally received at the same point, may be thought a mark of it. The local inflammation attending this latter mischief, usually terminates in an abscess, and the consequent fever is disposed to be putrid; whereas catarrhus inflammation, is of the erysipetalous kind, and when fever is produced it is inflammatory.

DURING the course of my observations, I have asserted, and I believe with much truth, that the disorder is neither dangerous, nor difficult to remove;

move; which is to be understood in a general sense. Some few exceptions of an aggravated nature, even where good lungs are concerned, may be very much otherwise. And those people who are phthically inclined, must by no means implicitly rely on the validity of my assertion, as I fear their cases can seldom be comprehended in the general rule. In a habit where the lungs are not perfectly sound, the accession of any mischief is to be regretted; more particularly if it be applied immediately to the defective part. To such unfortunate persons, I must strongly enforce the necessity, of their transferring much of the accustomed apprehension of danger, supposed to ensue from an unfavorable atmosphere, to the more evident source of the disorder — contagion. — Though the existing weakness may be aggravated by the former, it is by the latter only, that catarrhus
virus

may be superadded

move: which is a general
to shew some few exceptions of
FINALY, I seriously recommend all
who are blessed with good lungs and
tolerable health, not to forego either a
musement or exercise, because the wind
happens to blow from the east, or be-
cause the atmosphere contains a few
more watry particles than common.
And by observing such advice, they will
harden and improve a good constitu-
tion, and enable it to resist the inva-
sion of this, and other casual distem-
pers, when they happen to be expos-
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